

P.

30440/P

42550

Jewell  
Poisoning from opium.  

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Kennedy  
Nitrous acid as a substitute  
for blisters.

Killett.  
Nitrous acid as a substitute  
for blisters.  

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R. Martle  
Tania cured by oleum  
Terebinthinae.  

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7

30440/P

JEWEL



CASE.—A married woman, aged twenty-eight, swallowed, in a fit of despondency, a quantity of *LAUDANUM*, amounting, as it was alleged, to about two fluid ounces. This was about nine o'clock in the evening; and at about half past ten o'clock she was found in a state of insensibility by the reporter, who appears to have been the first medical man called upon to attend her.

By him a dose of *ipecacuanha* and *tartarised antimony* was immediately exhibited, which was followed in a little time by a strong solution of the *sulphate of zinc*, and large supplies of an infusion of *mustard*. By these means, together with constant irritation of the fauces with a feather, copious vomiting was, it appears, soon excited; after which the patient felt so far relieved as to be able to answer questions.

It not appearing, however, to the medical gentlemen present (for there were now two of them in attendance,) that the whole of the poison could well be dislodged by emetics simply, a third practitioner was summoned to their assistance, who speedily arrived, bringing with him Mr. Weiss, of the Strand, and a new *stomach-pump* of his invention. By means of this instrument the remaining contents of the stomach were, we are told, quickly evacuated; and that organ washed out with tepid water, until the fluid discharged no longer exhibited any traces of the *laudanum*.

The *cold affusion* was now determined on, and, as it would appear, 'liberally employed,' by pouring water from a jug over the head and neck of the patient,—and the first effects of this proceeding seem to have afforded great satisfaction; for the poor woman, we are told, '*raised herself up*, and, in a feeble voice, requested time to breathe.' But this 'reaction,' as it is called, was only of short duration; for the unfortunate patient sunk quickly again into that comatose state from which she had thus been recalled.

It was now deemed necessary to throw stimulants of various kinds into the stomach, and to administer others by the rectum;—the volatile alkali also was introduced into the nostrils, and frictions were 'incessantly employed' on the surface of the body. In fine, 'all the means usually adopted on similar occasions' were called into activity by the sedulous attendants: but in vain; for, notwithstanding 'the most indefatigable exertions' on their parts, the breathing soon became more difficult and stertorous; the whole frame sunk into a state of collapse; and, after one or two convulsive struggles, the woman expired at five o'clock in the morning, eight hours after having swallowed the fatal draught.

*Examination of the body.*—The body was examined thirty-three hours after death. In the *abdomen* no morbid appearance whatsoever, it is stated, was to be found; nor in the *thorax* was any thing observed worthy of notice, except the state of the heart, which was pale, bloodless, and flaccid.

In the *head*, however, matters were different; for, on removing the skull-cap, it was observed, 'that the vessels of the *dura mater* looked turgid,—those of the *arachnoid membrane* and *pia mater* still more so; and, upon examination of the *cerebrum*, the whole of the vascular system of the brain appeared enormously tumid, and every vessel seemed gorged with blood.' Some extravasated blood also





is stated to have been observed, particularly one portion or coagulum, 'upwards of an inch in extent,' which was found 'lying at the superior margin of the right lateral ventricle.'

*Observations.*—The preceding details are extracted from a communication, by Mr. JEWEL, of Gerrard Street, inserted in the London Med. Journal for February (p. 109). From the original article it appears that the patient had been confined in child-birth only fourteen days before the attempt made upon her life; that she had been previously subjected to a severe course of mercury, for some *supposed* syphilitic complaints; and that her mind had been for some time (perhaps months) in a state of extreme dejection and distress, in consequence of the alleged nature and apparent obstinacy of these complaints.

Under these circumstances, it is but reasonable to presume, that she was, at the time of the transaction above alluded to, but ill qualified, either in mind or in body, to bear up against infliction of any kind; or to endure with impunity, and still less with advantage, the continued application of powerful agents, whose chief operation consists in calling into *activity*, and therefore, to a certain degree, in *exhausting*, the remaining powers of life.

## IX.

*Observations on the Use of Nitrous Acid as a substitute for Blisters.* Communicated by Dr KENNEDY, F. R. S. E. and Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh.

*Extract of a Report from Mr Assistant Surgeon KILLETT, of the 3d Regiment Light Cavalry, to the Medical Board, Madras, dated Mhow, 4th November 1818.*

**I**N my report to the Board for the month of July last, I gave an account of the spasmodic cholera, as it came under my observation, during the short period it was prevalent at this place.

In that report, I recommended bleeding and blistering as the remedies chiefly to be relied on, considering the disease to be a spasmodic affection of the stomach and bowels, accompanied with inflammation, and quickly followed by a diminution of the powers of the brain; and I hinted that the actual cautery might be employed with advantage, as producing a more instantaneous counter-irritation, than the slow acting emplastrum lyttæ. Since writing the above mentioned report, I have been informed by Mr Assistant Surgeon Powell of the Bombay Detachment, now in camp, that he has used the nitric acid to produce a quick counter-irritation, and with the best success. Of forty-one cases which Mr Powell treated in this way, six only died; and of nine